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INTRODUCTION.

AMONG all the varied productions with which Nature has adorned the face of the earth, none awakens our sympathies, or interests us so powerfully as those venerable trees which seem to have stood so long, silent witnesses of the successive generations of man, to whose memory they so touching a resemblance, alike in their budding, their prime, and

Hence, in all ages, the earliest dawn of civilization has been marked by the reverence of woods and groves: devotion has fled to their refuge; the performance of her most solemn rites; princes have chosen the shade of some wide-spreading tree, under which to receive the deputation of ambassadors; and angels themselves, it is recorded, have descended to deliver their celestial messages beneath the same verdant canopy. Under the shadow of his own fig-tree, and drink of the fruit of it, the patriarch of olden times; and the reward promised, in Holy Writ, to the righteous man; and the nobleman, who is reminded, as his branches wave over him, of the sight of a favourite and long-remembered tree, is one of the noblest feelings of the human mind; and the peasant, who, passing it in his way to his labour, calls, as he looks on it, the sports of his infancy round its trunk, regards it at once as his chronicle and land-mark.

To preserve the characteristics, and perpetuate the remembrance of the most striking of these objects, in themselves so interesting, is the object of *SYLVA BRITANNICA*: in the descriptions, therefore, which accompany the plates, will be found, that although the minutiae of botanical definition are unnecessary, and even misplaced, in a work of so general a character, the circumstance of local connexion, or traditional interest, has been attended to; and gratified, indeed, will the author be, should his performance be the object of the minds of those who may favour it with their attention, even a pleasure which he has himself experienced, whilst haunting the woods, intent on delineating those varieties and peculiarities of their growth, which he has endeavoured to transfer to the following representation of the spirit of Nature as he could command, and with all the accuracy of remark, and faithful imitation may, he hopes, lay claim to, without the imputation of undue presumption.